of the palace was performed by eunuchs, and in the last years of the Ch'ing—as on several occasions under preceding ruling lines—a few of these unfortunates acquired a good deal of power.

THE CENTRAL MACHINERY

JBelow the Emperor, in the capital, and acting for him, were numerous bodies through which much of the supervision, of the realm was exercised. In practice the highest was the *Chun Chi Ch'u,* usually translated (very freely) as the Grand Council or^Council of State. Originated by the Manchus, it dated, at least in the form in which it became the Grand Council, from 1730. It usually met daily—in the very early morning. The number of its members was undetermined, but for many years was four or five, about half Chinese and half Manchus. Jn it most of the more important affairs of state were discussed.

In theory the highest body was not the *Chiin Chi Ch'u* but the *Nei Ko*—literally Inner Cabinet or Hall, but usually denominated in English the Grand Secretariat. This had been createfLunder the Ming,' taking the rank but not the power of the ancient premiership. Even after it had been superseded by the *Chun Chi Ch*ʲ*u* as the active Council of State, admission to one of its ranking posts (there were four Grand Secretaries and two Assistant Grand Secretaries, half being Manchus and half Chinese) was the highest honor which could come to a Chinese official. Its functions had, however, become almost nominal, and its members usually had other duties which took them away from the capital most of the time.

In addition to these two councils numbers of bureaus and boards existed to which were delegated specific portions of the

business of state. The chief of these were the "Six Boards'
Li Pu, or Board of Civil Office, the *Hu Pu,* or Board of Revenue,
the *Li Pu,* or Board of Ceremonies (in Chinese this *Li* is a differ-
ent character from that for the Board of Civil Office), the *Ping*
Pu, or Board of War, the *Hsing Pu,* or Board of Punishments
(probably, if its duties are taken into account, more accurately
named the Board of Law), and *Rung Pu,* or Board of Works,
The functions of these boards were, in general, those indicated
by the titles and, in a work of this length, require little further
elaboration.